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## **FRANKLIN COUNTY AND ST. GEORGE ISLAND OVERVIEW**

Mother Nature was extremely kind to Franklin County Florida. She deposited vast amounts of sand along with some “binding” vegetation just a few miles off the Panhandle county’s southern coast and a series of barrier islands were formed. Included in this number was long-legged (28 miles) and narrow (two miles) at the hips St. George Island. Originally called St. Georges Island, SGI is now the centerpiece of one of the state’s leading ecotourism destinations.

Selected Florida’s “Rural Community of the Year” in 1992, St. George Island has less than 1,000 permanent residents but has evolved into a Florida’s Forgotten Coast “magnet” that draws countless thousands of laidback fun-in-sun lovers from throughout the southeastern United States and across the world.

Franklin County is located in Florida’s “Great Northwest” Panhandle region. The somewhat remote county features a small regional airport in Apalachicola, with a big-city length runway, but only mostly private plane air traffic. There are also landing strips in Carrabelle and on St. George Island. The nearest significant airports are in Tallahassee (some 80 miles away) and Panama City. So they aren’t all that close. As a result most all visitors arrive by car, truck, van or boat.

The county’s neighbors are Liberty (north), Gulf (west) and Wakulla (east) Counties. And the Gulf of Mexico to the South. Only two highways lead into this ecological paradise – US Highway 98, which runs east and west, and State Road 65, which arrives from the north. In other words, the county has the unique distinction of having but three entrances (and exits).

It makes it pretty easy for local law enforcement to know which roads to patrol.

The county is comprised of 545 square miles, running approximately 56 miles in an east-west direction and approximately 10 miles in a north-south direction. Of its 348,800 acres, it features about 200 miles of relatively undeveloped coastal shoreline if the barrier islands of St. George, Little St. George, St. Vincent and Dog are taken into account.

The Apalachicola Bay and River Estuarine Reserve (ANERR), which includes St. George, is the largest in the United States. This vast expanse of shallow bays produces some of the finest seafood and fishing habitat in the country. In addition to the offshore islands, other portions of Franklin County are also

actually “islands.” The county features seven Rivers: Apalachicola, Carrabelle, Crooked, Ochlockonee, Brothers, Jackson and New. These “slice” the land mass into a series of “islands”.

The Apalachicola River, formed by the junction of the Chattahoochee and Flint Rivers flowing from Alabama and Georgia, collectively provide nutrient –rich fresh waters vital to Apalachicola Bay’s natural productivity and to the production of the World-Famous Apalachicola Bay Oysters. Local oyster boats can be seen being launched from a St. George Island ramp each morning.

Apalachicola is the county seat of Franklin County and other established cities and communities include St. George Island, Eastpoint, Carrabelle, Lanark Beach, Lanark Village, St. Teresa, and Alligator Point. The entire population of the county is likely less than 11,000. And that includes any Blue Tick Hounds.